

Message Text

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TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 272 - MARCH 14, 1977

1. PALESTINIANS. MODERATES YESTERDAY SCORED A CLEAR VICTORY OVER HARD-LINERS AT THE CAIRO MEETING OF THE PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL (PNC). THE PNC RE-ELECTED KHALID FAHUM, A PRO-SYRIAN INDEPENDENT, AS CHAIRMAN. FAHUM COLLECTED 172 VOTES AGAINST 69 FOR BAHJAT ABU GHARABIA OF THE POPULAR STRUGGLE FRONT (PSF), ONE OF THE FOUR COMMANDO GROUPS IN THE REJECTION FRONT. IF, AS WE BELIEVE, THIS VOTE IS A TRUE INDICATOR OF THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF DOVES AND HAWKS, ARAFAT IS UNLIKELY TO PRESS FOR MAJOR CHANGES IN PREVIOUS PNC RESOLUTIONS, FOR SUCH A MOVE WOULD CAUSE A SERIOUS RIFT.

2. IN ORDER TO ENSURE THEIR INFLUENCE WITH THE ARAB

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STATES, REJECTIONIST DELEGATIONS ARE CURRENTLY VISITING LIBYA AND ALGERIA. BY ILLUSTRATING THAT THEY HAVE INFLUENCE WITH THESE STATES THE REJECTIONISTS UNDOUBTEDLY HOPE THAT THEIR INFLUENCE WILL BE ENHANCED AT THE PNC MEETING. IN A MEMORANDUM CIRCULATED YESTERDAY AT THE MEETING THE REJECTIONISTS CALLED ON THE PNC TO STOP TALKING ABOUT A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT AND PUSH FOR THE

ESCALATION OF MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST ISRAEL. THE MEMORANDUM CALLED ON THE DELEGATES TO GET THE PNC "OUT

OF THE SETTLEMENT GAME" AND END DISCUSSIONS ABOUT A PALESTINIAN MINI-STATE AND A PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT. THE REJECTIONISTS ARE UNLIKELY TO GET SUCH A RESOLUTION ACCEPTED BY A MAJORITY OF DELEGATES.

3. WE DOUBT THAT THE CHARTER WILL BE ALTERED NOW, GIVEN ITS IDENTIFICATION WITH PALESTINIAN AUTONOMY AND THE DIVISIVE EFFECT WITHIN THE PLO OF A MOVE TO CHANGE IT. THERE ARE INDICATIONS, HOWEVER, THAT THE PNC MAY DEBATE THE REVISION OF THE 10-POINT PALESTINIAN POLITICAL PROGRAM ADOPTED IN 1973. A REAFFIRMATION OF THIS HARDLINE PROGRAM WOULD INDICATE CONTINUING INFLEXIBILITY. ON THE OTHER HAND, SOFTENING OF THE DOCUMENT OR FAILURE TO RECONFIRM IT WOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A SIGNIFICANT CONCESSION BY THE PLO AND WOULD BRING IT CLOSER TO THE VIEWS OF THE MODERATE ARAB STATES.

4. THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THIS PNC SESSION, AS PERCEIVED BY ARAFAT AND OTHER PALESTINIAN LEADERS, SEEMS TO BE TO SERVE AS A SYMBOL OF PALESTINIAN UNITY AND NOT TO MAKE ANY SIGNIFICANT SHIFTS IN PLO POLICY:

--PLO LEADERS WISH TO MAINTAIN THE AMBIGUITY OF THEIR POSITION IN ORDER TO MAXIMIZE THEIR MANEUVERABILITY IN FUTURE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.

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--THE PLO WANTS TO AVOID ACrimonious AND DIVISIVE DEBATE THAT COULD FRAGMENT THE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT.

--PALESTINIAN LEADERS ARE CONVINCED THAT THEIR RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS ALREADY HAVE DISPLAYED THEIR MODERATION. THEY ARE UNWILLING TO MAKE FURTHER CONCESSIONS TO ISREAL WITHOUT AN ISRAELI QUID PRO QUO.(SECRET)

5. ISRAEL. YADIN'S DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE (DMC) MADE PUBLIC ON MARCH 8 THE FOREIGN POLICY PLANK DRAFTED BY ITS PLATFORM COMMITTEE. THIS PLANK, WHICH IS LIKELY TO BE APPROVED BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

-.ISRAEL'S DEFENSIBLE BORDERS INCLUDE THE JORDAN RIVER AND SOME AREAS WEST OF IT.

--ISRAEL MUST BE READY FOR A TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE WITHOUT UNDERCUTTING ITS SECURITY.

--AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE IS UNACCEPTABLE;
IT WOULD THREATEN ISRAEL'S SECURITY AND EXISTENCE.
THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF PALESTINIAN IDENTITY LIES
IN "ISRAEL'S NEIGHBOR TO THE EAST," WHOSE CAPITAL WILL
BE ON THE EAST BANK.

--TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS IN THE WEST BANK ARE OPPOSED
EXCEPT IN THE CONTEXT OF "A FULL PEACE AGREEMENT."

6. THE PROPOSED FOREIGN POLICY PLANK IS A COMPROMISE
REFLECTING THE BALANCE OF POWER BETWEEN THE HARDLINERS AND
DOVES WITHIN THE PARTY. WHILE GENERALLY SIMILAR TO
THAT OF LABOR, THE DMC PLANK IS TOUGHER IN ONE SIGNIFI-
CANT RESPECT: IT EXPLICITLY PRECLUDES TERRITORIAL CON-
CESSIONS IN THE WEST BANK WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF AN INTERIM
AGREEMENT.

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7. PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT THE HARDLINERS
MAY BE RELATIVELY STRONGER WITHIN THE DMC THAN IN LABOR.
THE ABILITY OF THE HAWKS TO COMMIT THE DMC TO OPPOSE AN
INTERIM AGREEMENT ON THE WEST BANK SUGGESTS THE PARTY
MIGHT SPLIT SHOULD ISRAEL HAVE TO MAKE TOUGH TERRITORIAL
DECISIONS. CONSEQUENTLY, THE DMC APPEARS LIKELY TO
PROVE LESS RESPONSIVE THAN LABOR TO PROMPTINGS FROM THE
US FOR SIGNIFICANT MOVEMENT IN THE PEACE PROCESS.
(CONFIDENTIAL)

8. EGYPT. EMBASSY CAIRO HAS REPORTED THAT FAHMY HAS
SAID HE AND OTHER EGYPTIANS REMAIN GREATLY CONCERNED AT
WHAT THEY FEEL IS AN UNBALANCED AND UNNECESSARY AIRING
OF VIEWS BY THE US ON THE QUESTION OF DEFENSIBLE BORDERS.
AT LEAST PART OF THEIR CONCERN SEEMS TO BE BASED ON
THEIR BEING CAUGHT BY SURPRISE AT A TIME WHEN SADAT WAS IN
A DIFFICULT POSITION WITH THE PNC IN CAIRO.

9. IN PRESSING THE PNC TO ACCEPT A MINI-PALESTINIAN
STATE ON THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, HE IS FACING STIFF
RESISTENCE AMONG THE PALESTINANS. IF, AT THIS POINT,
HE WERE TO SAY ANYTHING THAT WOULD SUGGEST TO THE PALES-
TINIANS THAT IN FACT THEY WOULD NOT RECEIVE ALL OF
THE WEST BANK, HIS POSITION IN URGING A MINI-STATE WOULD
BECOME LESS CREDIBLE. THUS HIS PUBLIC REITERATION OF THE
LONGSTANDING EGYPTIAN POSITION--SURRENDER "NOT ONE TNCH"
OF ARAB TERRITORY--WAS HIS ONLY RECOURSE.

10. EMBASSY CAIRO REPORTED THAT FORMER PARLIAMENT DEPUTY
(AND EX-VICE PRESIDENT) KAMAL AL-DIN, WHO WAS EXPELLED

FROM PARLIAMENT FOR WRITTEN ATTACKS ON SADAT, HAS WON A COURT BATTLE TO RUN IN A BI-ELECTION FOR HIS PREVIOUS SEAT. KAMAL'S TRIUMPH HAS BEEN IGNORED IN THE CAIRO PRESS BUT THE EMBASSY COMMENTED THAT THE RESULTS OF THE MARCH 12 ELECTION COULD PROVIDE AN INTERESTING BAROMETER

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OF THE EGYPTIAN POLITICAL CLIMATE.

11. CAIRO MENA REPORTS THAT FIVE PEOPLE ARRESTED BY EGYPTIAN POLICE HAVE CONFESSED TO BEING LIBYAN AGENTS WHO HAD BEEN SENT TO CAIRO TO CARRY OUT ACTS OF SABOTAGE DURING LAST WEEK'S AFRO-ARAB SUMMIT. THE AGENTS, ALLEGEDLY RECRUITED AND TRAINED BY LIBYAN INTELLIGENCE, TOLD EGYPTIAN AUTHORITIES THAT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO EXPLODE BOMBS IN CROWDED PARTS OF CAIRO. ANOTHER ALLEGED LIBYAN AGENT, FOUND GUILTY BY A MILITARY COURT OF HAVING PLANNED A TERRORIST BOMBING, WAS EXECUTED ON MARCH 10.

(SECRET)

12. LEBANON. AFTER RELAXING PRESS CENSORSHIP REGULATIONS ON SATURDAY, THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT CANCELLED THE EARLIER ANNOUNCEMENT AND REINSTITUTED THE PRESS CURBS YESTERDAY. NO REASON WAS GIVEN FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION, BUT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE SYRIANS--WHO FAVOR PRESS CENSORSHIP--MAY HAVE PRESSURED THE LEBANESE TO REVERSE THEIR DECISION.

13. THE ISRAELIS CONTINUE TO PRESS THEIR "GOOD FENCES" POLICY WITH SOUTH LEBANON. THE GOVERNMENT PRESS OFFICE ANNOUNCED ON MARCH 10 THAT THE ISRAELIS HAVE DECLARED METULLA AND DOVEV ON THE LEBANESE BORDER AS OFFICIAL ENTRY AND EXIT STATIONS. IT WAS NOTED THAT 1,250 VISITORS HAVE ENTERED ISRAEL THROUGH THESE CROSSINGS. EMBASSY TEL AVIV OBSERVES THAT THIS LAYS THE LEGAL FOUNDATION FOR AN OPEN BORDER WITH LEBANON. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

14. SYRIA-IRAQ. EMBASSY DAMASCUS HAS OBSERVED THAT AS SYRIA REENGAGES IN DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TOWARD A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT, THE RIVAL IRAQI BA'THI REGIME APPEARS STILL COMMITTED TO TOPPLE ASAD'S GOVERNMENT, DISRUPT SYRIAN EFFORTS TO RESTORE STABILITY IN LEBANON, AND STIMULATE PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS TO RESIST PARTICIPATION

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IN ANY NEGOTIATIONS. ASAD MUST CONTEND WITH THESE

PRESSURES WHILE HE PREPARES HIS POLITICAL STRATEGY AND
PROMOTES ARAB SOLIDARITY.

15. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT IRAQ POSSESSES SUFFICIENT
ASSETS WITHIN SYRIA TO CAUSE MAJOR POLITICAL DAMAGE.
INDEED, WE BELIEVE THAT IT CAN, AT MOST, TRY TO EXPLOIT
EXISTING INTERNAL TENSIONS. WIDER AND STEPPED UP IRAQI
ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF ANTI-SYRIAN ELEMENTS IN LEBANON
WOULD PROBABLY BE MORE DAMAGING. EMBASSY DAMASCUS CON-
CLUDES THAT IRAQ'S CAMPAIGN WILL NOT FRUSTRATE ASAD'S
OBJECTIVES BUT THAT IT MAY DIMINISH HIS MARGIN FOR ERROR
AND RAISE THE PRICE ASAD MUST PAY FOR FOLLOWING THE
PEACE PROCESS ROUTE. (SECRET)
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